

**Monday, April 27th, 2009**

**Quote of the Day:** "I am for government rigorously frugal and simple. Were we directed from Washington when to sow, when to reap, we would soon want bread" - Thomas Jefferson

You hear from me and hear my opinions a lot. My thoughts are often based on information that you may not have because your full time job is not studying political issues and voting on them as mine is. So here's your turn to play Member of Congress. Here are 4 issues currently in the news or under discussion. I will tell you what I know about them and then give you 3 choices on what to do. Now, I know that some of you will say that you didn't like any of the 3 choices and you have your own idea. But often in Congress, we only get three choices - vote for it, vote against it, or abstain. I will give you the results in the next laptop report:

**Waterboarding:** Clearly not all of the classified documents have been released and not all information is available. But it appears that 3 leading Al Qaeda detainees were waterboarded numerous times after which, at least one of them, indicated that there were new terrorist plots about which the US would learn when they happened. Speaker Pelosi and other Congressional leaders were informed of the decision to use the controversial interrogation method and did not protest at the time. Information obtained from these waterboarding interrogations tipped off US officials as to the plot to blow up the tallest office building in Los Angeles. That plan was then foiled by law enforcement and counter-terrorism officials. Therefore, it appears that the destruction of that building and potentially the loss of many thousand American lives was prevented by these interrogations. But others say that such methods should never be employed by a civilized society even to save many lives. There are certain things we just don't do. As you consider such a decision, I think it is important to think about what might have happened had the information not been obtained and the building destroyed. Would we now be investigating intelligence agencies for not doing enough to prevent it, which is what happened after 9/11? If your son, daughter, parent, or spouse were in that building, would you feel differently? Before you decide, you may also want to know that pilots and special operations forces (Navy Seals and the like) undergo waterboarding during training to teach them not to break under these types of interrogation tactics. Do you believe:

- a) Waterboarding is justified under circumstances such as these because of the consequences.
- b) Waterboarding is never justified regardless of the consequences and the act itself has it's own societal consequences.
- c) Undecided.

\* To participate in Congressman Campbell's next survey, sign up for his laptop report here: [Laptop Report Sign-up](#)

**California Borrowing:** The State of California is in deep fiscal trouble as all of you fellow residents of the Golden State probably know. Within about 2 months, the State of California needs to sell \$15 billion in short term (1-2 years) notes or the state will run out of cash in July. The State Treasurer Bill Lockyer believes that the debt issue will fail because there won't be enough buyers for the debt given the state's low credit rating. If this happens, there are no provisions in federal law for a state to go bankrupt so if California runs out of cash it cannot discharge debts. It will have to decide who it can pay and pay them and give the rest IOUs. Obviously, this would pretty much be the nightmare scenario for the state. California has asked for the federal government (FDIC, Treasury, or whoever) to guarantee this debt. Apparently, New York, Illinois, and several cities are not far behind California in this problem. A proposal is floating around for the feds to guarantee all debt of municipalities and states that request it. One side believes that a federal guarantee will simply reward the failures of some to balance their budgets and will encourage more of the same in the future while putting federal taxpayers on the hook for billions more in debt that may never be paid off. Others believe that California is "too big to fail," and since we have bailed out companies why not bail out governments. You think:

- a) That's crazy. Don't do it. Let them work out their own problems.
- b) We have to do this because too many government services depend on solvent state and local governments.
- c) How about a middle ground. We guarantee state debt only (not municipal) for a large fee so that states won't do it unless they have no other option.

**Earmarking:** Recently, a large lobbying firm in Washington was raided by the FBI in a sting designed to obtain evidence that the company was trading earmarks for campaign contributions. The firm, PMA Group, who had 34 lobbyists on staff in February, has since announced it was shutting down in the weeks following the raid. Congressman Jeff Flake (R-AZ) has put a resolution on the House floor 7 times now to ask the House Ethics Committee to do its own investigation on trading of earmarks for campaign contributions. News reports indicate that PMA clients received \$300 million in earmarks in the 2008 Defense Appropriations Bill, while giving \$1.8 million in contributions to 91 Members of Congress who pushed for earmarks to go to PMA Clients since 2001. Congressman Flake's resolution has failed to pass all 7 times. Congressman Paul Hodes (D-NH) has introduced a bill to ban requesting an earmark for any project or entity from which the member has received a campaign contribution. I am cosponsor of this legislation. The bill has yet to be heard in front of any committee. Do you believe:

- a) I support both the ethics investigation and a ban on campaign contributions from earmark recipients.
- b) I support a complete ban on earmarks.
- c) I take the position of most members of Congress and would oppose both the investigation and the ban.

**Really Important Stuff:** Now on to a critically important issue - college football. USC has been unjustly denied the right to play in the BCS title game the last 3 years. Therefore Congress should:

- a) Investigate the BCS, control their salaries, cap their bonuses, and send them to Guantanamo Bay since it's going to be vacant soon.
- b) Go back to the bowl system and make the BCS illegal.
- c) Mandate the Mountain West Conference proposal to have 5 BCS regular bowl games with the winners of 4 of those games going to a 2 round playoff.
- d) Save the carbon footprint of all of those bowl games by just eliminating them and let President Obama declare a national champion.
- e) Just make the national championship game between USC and whoever appears to be second best and leave it at that (except Notre Dame can never qualify)

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OK. So maybe that last one is a little tongue in cheek. OK, OK, a lot tongue in cheek. But there is a bill out there to do away with the BCS and the President has publicly called for a playoff system so it is now a government issue. I have not co-sponsored the BCS bill by the way.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell